

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

ON-CHIP MULTIPLE TAP TRANSFORMER AND INDUCTOR

This patent application is claiming priority under 35 USC § 120 to co-pending
5 patent application entitled ON-CHIP MULTIPLE TAP TRANSFORMER AND
INDUCTOR having a serial number of 10/200,990 and a filing date of 7/23/2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to radio communication technology and more
particularly to transformers used within the radio communication technology.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

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Two-way radios, which may be incorporated in wireless communication devices,
are known to include an antenna, a transformer, an antenna switch, a receiver section, and
a transmitter section. The antenna switch couples either the receiver section or the
transmitter section to the antenna via the transformer. The transformer may be a
transformer balun (balanced/unbalanced) and is generally used to convert single ended
signals into differential signals and conversely to convert differential signals into single
ended signals. For example, received RF signals via the antenna are converted into
differential signals, which are provided to a low noise amplifier of the receiver section.
Conversely, differential signals from a power amplifier of the transmitter section are
converted into single ended signals, which are provided to the antenna.

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As the demand for integrated circuit radios increases, many attempts have been
made to integrate transformers and/or transformer baluns onto radio frequency integrated
circuits. However, such integration has been limited due to flux leakage, capacitive
coupling limits, and significant series resistance. To reduce these limitations, advances
25 have been made in transformer IC design including coplanar interleaved transformers,
toroidal and concentric transformers, overlay transformers and symmetric coplanar

transformers. Coplanar interleaved transformers have the primary and secondary windings interleaved on the same integrated circuit layer, where the primary and secondary windings are constructed of planer metal traces. While coplanar interleaved transformers reduces size and resistance and are widely used, they suffer from low 5 quality (Q) factor, small coupling coefficients, and, if used as a balun, the center tap is often at an undesirable location, resulting in an asymmetric geometry. As is known, asymmetry of a transformer winding causes an imbalance in the resulting differential signal and/or an imbalance in the resulting single ended signal from a differential signal.

10 Toroidal and concentric transformers have the primary and secondary windings on several dielectric layers of an integrated circuit. Each layer includes one or more primary and secondary turns, where turns on different layers are coupled in series using vias. Each of the primary turns, on each layer, is constructed around the secondary turns on the same layer. While such toroidal and concentric transformers are well suited for 15 multi-layer structures, they suffer from weak coupling, inconvenient center tap locations, and are asymmetrical.

20 Overlay transformers include a primary spiral inductor on a top layer and a secondary spiral inductor on a lower layer. Such transformers have high coupling coefficients and relatively small area; however, the secondary is asymmetrical creating a loading asymmetry.

25 Symmetric coplanar transformers include the primary and secondary windings on the same layer with interconnecting bridges on lower layers. While such transformers have high symmetry, they have weak magnetic coupling and are usually large for desirable inductor values.

30 While each of these various embodiments of on-chip transformers have utility and certain applications they do not provide multiple uses for various applications. Therefore, a need exists for a multi-use on-chip transformer that is small, provides

reasonable inductance values, has a high quality factor, reduces resistance and has a high coupling coefficient.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The on-chip multiple tap transformer and inductor of the present invention substantially meets these needs and others. One embodiment of an on-chip multiple tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention includes a 1st winding and a 2nd winding having two portions. The 1st winding is on a 1st layer of an integrated circuit and is operably coupled for a single ended signal. The 1st and 2nd portions of the 2nd winding are on a 2nd layer of the integrated circuit. The 1st portion of the 2nd winding includes a 1st node, a 2nd node, and a tap. The 1st node is operably coupled to receive a 1st leg of a 1st differential signal and the 2nd node is coupled to a reference potential. The tap of the 1st portion is operably coupled for a 1st leg of a 2nd differential signal. The 2nd portion of the 2nd winding includes a 1st node, 2nd node, and tap. The 1st node is operably coupled to receive a 2nd leg of the 1st differential signal and the 2nd node is operably coupled to the reference potential. The tap of the 2nd portion is coupled for a 2nd leg of the 2nd differential signal. The 1st and 2nd portions of the 2nd winding are symmetrical with respect to the 1st and 2nd nodes and with respect to the tap nodes. Such an on-chip multiple tap transformer balun may be used to convert single ended signals into one or more differential signals. Further, the on-chip multiple tap transformer balun may be used to convert one or more differential signals into a single ended signal.

Another embodiment of a multi-tap differential inductor in accordance with the present invention includes a 1st winding and a 2nd winding. The 1st winding is on a 1st layer of an integrated circuit and is coupled for a single ended signal. The 2nd winding is on a 2nd layer of the integrated circuit and is coupled to receive 1st and 2nd differential signals. To receive such differential signals, the 2nd winding includes 1st and 2nd nodes that are coupled to receive the 1st differential signal and 1st and 2nd taps to receive the 2nd differential signal. A 3rd tap of the secondary is coupled to a reference potential. The 2nd winding is symmetrical about the 3rd tap to produce a symmetrical on-chip multi-tap transformer balun.

An embodiment of an on-chip multi-tap differential inductor includes a 1st winding and a 2nd winding. Each winding is on the same layer of an integrated circuit. The 1st winding includes a 1st node that is coupled to receive a 1st leg of a differential signal and a 2nd node coupled to a reference potential. The 1st winding also includes a tap that is operably coupled to receive a 1st leg of a 2nd differential signal. The 2nd winding includes a 1st node coupled to receive a 2nd leg of the 1st differential signal and a 2nd node coupled to the reference potential. The 2nd winding further includes a tap operably coupled for a 2nd leg of the 2nd differential signal. The 2nd winding is substantially symmetrical to the 1st winding and the tap of the 1st winding is substantially symmetrical to the tap of the 2nd winding.

The various embodiments of multiple tap differential transformer baluns and differential inductors provide for multiple uses in various applications including radio frequency integrated circuits. By including one or more sets of taps, an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun or inductor, the transformer or inductor may be used in a variety of different manners, which may correspond to different operating frequencies, different desired inductancies, different transformer ratios, et cetera.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of a multi-tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention;

25 Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of an alternate multiple tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 3 illustrates a top view of a multi-tap winding of a multi-tap transformer balun or inductor in accordance with the present invention;

30 Figure 4 is a cross sectional view of a multi-tap transformer balun or inductor in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 5 is a bottom view of a 1st winding of an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention;

5 Figure 6 is a cross sectional view of a multi-layered multiple tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 7 is a cross sectional diagram of an alternate on-chip multi-tap transformer balun in accordance with the present invention;

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Figure 8 is a graphical representation of an alternate 2nd winding for an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun or a on-chip multi-tap inductor in accordance with the present invention; and

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Figure 9 is a diagram of an alternate 2nd winding for an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun or inductor in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun 10 that is operably coupled to convert a single ended input signal 16 into a 1st differential output signal 18 and a 2nd differential output signal 20. The transformer 10 includes a 1st winding 12 and a 2nd winding 14. The 2nd winding includes a 1st portion and a 2nd portion each of which includes two nodes and a tap. The common nodes of the 1st and 2nd portion of the 2nd winding 14 are operably coupled to a reference potential (e.g., AC ground). The taps of the 1st and 2nd portions of the 2nd winding 14 are operably coupled to produce the 2nd differential output signal 20. The 1st nodes of the 1st and 2nd portions of the 2nd winding 14 are operably coupled to produce the 1st differential output signal 18.

30 The taps are symmetrical with respect to the node coupled to the AC ground reference potential. The 1st and 2nd portions of the 2nd winding 14 are symmetrical to each other such that balance differential output signals 18 and 20 are produced. The turns

ratio between the 1st winding 12 and the 2nd winding 14 depends on the desired gain to be achieved via the transformer. For example, the primary winding may consist of two turns while the 2nd winding consists of nine turns. As one of average skill in the art will appreciate, other combinations of turn ratios may be used to provide a desired gain. As 5 one of average skill in the art will further appreciate, in many applications, only one set of the differential outputs will be used at a given time.

Figure 2 illustrates an on-chip multi-tap transformer balun 30 that is operably coupled to convert one or more differential input signals 32 or 34 into a single ended output signal 36. In this embodiment, the transformer 30 again includes the 1st winding 12 and 2nd winding 14. In this embodiment, the 1st differential input signal 32 or the 2nd differential input signal 34 will be coupled to the secondary winding 14. As such, the 1st winding 12 produces a single ended output signal 36 corresponding to either the 1st differential input signal 32 or the 2nd differential input signal 34.

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The 2nd winding 14 includes a 1st and 2nd portion each having a 1st node, a 2nd node, and a tap. The 2nd nodes of the respective portions of the 2nd winding 14 are operably coupled to the AC ground reference potential and the 1st nodes of the respective portions are coupled to receive the 1st differential input signal 32. The taps of each 20 portion of the 2nd winding 14 are operably coupled to receive the 2nd differential input signal 34.

As one of average skill in the art will appreciate, the 1st and 2nd differential input signals 34 may be used individually or simultaneously to provide inputs to the 25 transformer 30 as long as, for simultaneous use, the inputting of two signals does not saturate the transformer. The resulting single ended output signal 38 will represent a mixing of the 1st and 2nd differential input signals 32 and 34.

Figures 3-5 illustrate a physical embodiment of the transformers 10 or 30 of 30 Figures 1 and 2. Figure 3 illustrates the top view of the 2nd winding 14. As shown, the 2nd winding 14 includes a 1st node of a 2nd portion, a tap of the 1st portion, bridges 42, a

tap of the 2nd portion, a 1st node of the 1st portion, and coupling to a reference potential 40. The number of turns for the 2nd winding 14 may vary from one to multiple turns. The 2nd winding 14 may be fabricated utilizing the metalization layer of the integrated circuit having the lowest resistivity. Typically, for a CMOS process, this particular 5 metalization layer is the top metal layer.

Figure 3 further illustrates a physical embodiment for a multi-tap differential inductor. For this inductor, the 1st winding corresponds to the 1st portion of the 2nd winding 14 and the 2nd winding corresponds to the 2nd portion. As will be discussed in 10 greater detail with reference to Figures 6 and 7, if Figure 3 is constructed to implement a multi-tap differential inductor, the 2nd winding may include shunt windings on different layers. By utilizing shunt windings, the series resistance of the inductor decreases thereby increasing the quality factor of the inductor.

15 Figure 4 illustrates a cross sectional view of transformer 10 or 30 to include dielectric layer 44, dielectric layer 46, and dielectric layer 48. The dielectric layer 44 supports a 1st metalization layer that is used to fabricate the 2nd winding 14. The dielectric layer 46 supports the bridges 42 and the coupling to the reference potential 40. The dielectric layer 48 supports the 1st winding 12.

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Figure 5 illustrates a bottom view of transformer 10 or 30 and illustrates the geometric shape of an embodiment of the 1st winding 12. The 1st winding 12 is shown to include one turn but may include multiple turns depending on the desired turns ratio for transformer 10 or 30.

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Figure 6 illustrates an alternate cross sectional view of transformer 10 and 30 where the 2nd winding includes a shunt winding 54. In this embodiment, two additional dielectric layers 50 and 52 are illustrated. As shown, the shunt winding 54 is supported by dielectric layer 50 and the corresponding bridges and coupling to reference potential 30 40 are supported by dielectric layer 52. The shunt winding 54 is coupled in parallel with

the 2nd winding 14 to reduce the resistivity of the 2nd winding 14. The 1st winding 12 is supported by dielectric layer 48.

Figure 7 illustrates an alternate cross sectional view of transformer 10 or 30 that 5 includes the primary winding including one or more shunt windings 62. In this example, the primary winding includes two shunt windings 62. As shown, the additional shunt windings are supported by dielectric layers 58 and 60.

As one of average skill in the art will appreciate, the 2nd winding 14 as well as the 10 1st winding 12 may include shunt windings. As such, a transformer incorporating a combination of Figures 6 and 7 may be readily obtained.

Figure 8 illustrates an alternate geometric shape for the 2nd winding 70 or for the 15 multi-tap differential inductor. In this configuration, the geometric shape corresponds to a rectangular octagonal shape. The particular length and width of the rectangular octagonal shape is based on a balancing of the inductance value, the turns ratio, the quality factor and capacitance of the windings.

As shown, the 2nd winding 70 includes the 1st node of the 2nd portion, a tap of the 20 1st portion, bridges 42, a tap of the 2nd portion, a 1st node of the 1st portion, and coupling to a reference potential 40.

Figure 9 illustrates an alternate embodiment of the 2nd winding 80 or the multi-tap 25 differential inductor. In this embodiment, the 1st and 2nd portions each include a 1st and 2nd tap. The 2nd taps of the 1st and 2nd portion are operably coupled to receive a 3rd differential signal.

As shown, the 1st portion includes a 1st tap and a 2nd tap and two nodes. The 2nd portion includes a 1st node and 2nd node and two taps. The bridges are used to couple the 30 various windings together and to maintain symmetry of the 2nd winding 80.

The preceding discussion has presented an on-chip multiple tap transformer balun and/or multiple tap differential inductor. As one of average skill in the art will appreciate, other embodiments may be derived from the teaching of the present invention, without deviating from the scope of the claims.